

Billings Tire Dealer Named SBA's Montana Small Business Person of the Year



Harry Staley of Staley Tire and Automotive, Inc.
of Billings

Harry Staley of Staley Tire and Automotive, Inc. of Billings has been named SBA's 2005 Montana Small Business Person of the Year. Staley will be honored, along with an outstanding ensemble of business owners and advocate champions, at SBA's annual Small Business Week Awards luncheon on May 6, 2005, at the Billings Hotel and Convention Center located at 1223 Mallowney Lane in Billings.

Staley Tire and Automotive, Inc. is a Montana corporation started in 1985 by Harry Staley. The early years for Staley Tire and Automotive, Inc. were a struggle to survive. The company began operations with three employees and during the first year in business had sales of approximately \$200,000. For the first several years Staley leased a facility, then with the help of an SBA guaranteed loan he decided to purchase the building located at 2503 1st Avenue North in Billings. Staley continued to focus on tire sales, but also expanded his services at the downtown facility to include tire balancing and alignment, tire repair, shock and strut repair, automotive tune-ups, and oil changes.

In 1996, Staley added a second Billings location at 1245 Central Avenue. This facility was significantly larger than the downtown facility, and again offered additional automotive services. These included drive line and drive train repair, diagnosis and repair of collision caused suspension and body damage, tire siping, detailed inspection of used cars prior to purchase by customers, and unique high end equipment for low profile, high performance tire repair and balancing – one of the very few places in the region that offered this service. One other service added was a state of the art service truck which allowed for mobile tire service for industrial, medium truck, farm and over the road (OTR) tires.

This year, as Staley Tire and Automotive celebrates 20 years in business, they are also celebrating construction of a new 20,000 square foot centralized warehouse and Interstate Service Center. This is now their third location in Billings. The new center will allow for consolidation of in-house tire inventory and other warehousing services. The expansion will also allow Staley to facilitate the addition of medium duty truck services to his business model.

Currently, Staley Tire & Automotive employs nearly 30 individuals, up from the three they started with twenty years ago, and sales have increased from \$200,000 to over \$3 million. As Staley's business has grown and prospered, he has also championed smaller tire dealers in the region. Over the last four years, Staley has passed along his buying power through the Del-Nat Corporation to a select group of tire dealers located in rural markets, which enables them to keep their buying price as low as possible. This gives the small dealers the opportunity to sell to their local customers at very competitive prices, keeping them happy and not losing them to the larger retailers in urban cities or the large, discount retailers. Staley not only shares his pricing with them, but he provides marketing ideas and strategies, and advises them on a regular basis. He enjoys seeing these small dealers enjoy success.

Over the past twenty years Staley Tire and Automotive, Inc. has provided significant donations to the community in the form of cash, products and services. Some of those that have benefited from Staley's generosity include: Eagle Mount of Billings, the American Red Cross, Missing Children Alert Program; Care Net; Shepherd FFA; Optimist Club International; Billings American Legion Baseball; Billings Catholic Schools and Billings West High School National Youth Leaders.

By recognizing an opportunity, diversifying his products, and overcoming obstacles, Harry Staley took an idea and molded it into a highly successful business model. Staley's growth and success is a function of his core business philosophy, which is to treat the customer the way you would want to be treated and his vehicle as if it were yours! He is truly a champion for small business. Harry Staley was nominated by Scott Langman of Big Sky Economic Development Authority.

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